INTRODUCTION

This Volume of the Urban Forest Manual (UFM) is a technical guide created to facilitate the planning, design, installation and maintenance of landscaping that is required for new development and redevelopment per Tacoma’s Municipal Code (TMC) 13.06.502 Landscaping and Buffering Standards. It is intended to be used concurrently with TMC 13.06.502 to ensure the requirements and standards are executed properly. Before finalizing development plans, contact Planning and Development Services (PDS) at (253) 591-5030, or visit Planning and Development Services, at 747 Market St., 3rd floor, to verify that all other applicable City codes and manuals have been met. This manual can also be used as a guide for the planning, design, installation and maintenance for any landscaping project.

INTENT

Tacoma’s Landscaping requirements are intended to contribute to the aesthetic environment of the City; enhance livability and foster economic development. Effective landscaping can provide for an attractive urban setting; support the urban citywide tree canopy and wildlife, such as birds; buffer visual impacts of development; help reduce storm water runoff; and, contribute to the planting, maintenance, and preservation of a stable and sustainable urban forest.

The Landscaping Code helps to support this intent by requiring landscaping (trees, shrubs and groundcover) be installed when significant development activities take place. In crafting the Landscaping Code, the City sought to achieve these objectives in a flexible manner that does not overly burden development activities. Landscaping requirements generally apply to new construction and substantial alterations of structures, parking areas, streets and sidewalks. Minor alterations, and one, two and three-family development, are exempt from landscaping requirements, except for street tree requirements triggered by off-site improvements as specified in Section 4.2.3 Street Trees. The code also contains a range of options intended to provide flexibility while still meeting the intent, as well as incentives for inclusion of desired features like larger tree species, native plants, and Low Impact Development stormwater facilities.

When required, landscaping must comply with the code standards for plant selection, installation and maintenance. These code standards are intended to better ensure that plants survive and thrive, to minimize conflicts with infrastructure, and in some cases to provide a substantial visual buffer. Generally, landscaping plans, and management plans detailing how landscaping will be maintained, must be prepared by a professional. The code also references this Urban Forest Manual as a source of additional guidance on the technical aspects of landscaping. However, please note that the Landscaping Code (TMC 13.06.502) is the source of regulatory authority and is the final say on landscaping requirements.

In certain instances, other City codes may require or pertain to landscaping. For additional landscaping requirements, erosion control and other stormwater related measures, refer to the City of Tacoma’s Stormwater Management Manual (SWMM) available on the Surface Water Management website at www.cityoftacoma.org/stormwatermanual. For street tree planting and pruning not associated with development activities, refer to TMC Title 9.
DETERMINING LANDSCAPING REQUIREMENTS

This manual is organized to guide users in determining if and how landscaping is required in association with development activities. The following steps are recommended:

1. Determine if your development will trigger landscaping requirements, and which ones apply.

   Chapter 1 of the UFM provides an overview of Tacoma’s landscaping requirements and an indication of when they typically apply. It is intended to be used in conjunction with TMC 13.06.502.E.

2. If landscaping is required, determine how much and what type is required. UFM Chapter 2 includes a Landscaping Requirements Table, for use in determining how much landscaping will be required, based on the location, scope and type of development activities. In addition, UFM Chapter 3 provides guidance on determining whether landscaping features eligible for incentives or bonuses under the landscaping code may reduce the amount of required landscaping or provide flexibility on planting location.

3. Determine requirements intended to ensure that landscaping survives and thrives.

   UFM Chapter 4 provides guidance on planting and installation.

4. Based on the landscaping that is required and how it should be selected and cared for, prepare your application for submittal with your building or site development permit. To enable staff to determine that your proposed landscaping meets the code, the following items are required for submittal:
   - Requirements table - (discussed in Chapter 2 and provided as Appendix 1)
   - Landscape Plan - (refer to Chapter 5 and Appendix 2)
   - Landscape Management Plan - (refer to Chapter 6 and Appendix 3)
   - Tree Protection Plan & Arborist Report (if retaining vegetation) – (refer to Chapter 7 and Appendix 4)

5. After submittal, City staff will guide you through the review and approval process.

   Once construction permits are issued, landscaping is required to be installed (or bonded for) in accordance with the approved plans and pertinent code requirements. Ongoing maintenance and replacement of required landscaping is the responsibility of the property owner.